The Collection of the Qur'ān
A Reconsideration of Western Views in Light of Recent Methodological Developments*

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Dedicated to the memory of
Ed de Moor

I. The Qur'ān as a historical source

Ever since the Qur'ān came into (earthly) existence, it has been used for different reasons. For Muslims it has always been a source of moral and religious inspiration and benefit. Muslim scholars have studied it chiefly as a basis for their system of legal and theological doctrines and seldom for purely historical reasons. The interest of modern Western (non-Muslim) scholars in the Qur'ān, however, has mainly been historical. It is used as a source for the preaching of Muḥammad and for details of his prophetic career, as a document of early Islam and even as a source for pre-Islamic religion and society of the Arabs.

If one decides to approach the Qur'ān as a historical source, it must be subjected to source criticism, which is one of the great methodological achievements of the modern study of history. The purpose of source criticism is to check the authenticity, originality and correctness of what a source purports to be or is thought to inform us about. When trying to determine the reliability of a source, the first questions a historian usually asks are: How far away in time and space is the source from the event about which it informs us? Are the date and place of origin which the source claims for itself correct?

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However, most scholars do not ask such questions any more. They take for granted that the Qur'ān is Muḥammad's prophecy and that even the time and place of origin of its parts can be determined with some certainty. Yet the fact that there are a few scholars who doubt this almost generally accepted view and wonder whether all parts of the Qur'ān really do have the same author, reminds us that historical insights are never final, but must be constantly reviewed. It is therefore legitimate to ask some source-critical questions concerning the Qur'ān once again. Taking as starting point the almost generally accepted view that the Qur'ān contains the revelations which Muḥammad announced during the first third of the 7th century AD at Mecca and Medina, we may ask: Where does this piece of information come from?

To answer this question in an empirically scientific way, we have three possible sources of knowledge at our disposal: early Qur'ānic manuscripts, the text of the Qur'ān itself, and the Islamic tradition relating to the Qur'ān. Let us first see whether these sources offer the necessary clues.

The question as to whether an early text really goes back to its reported author can be easily answered if we find its autograph. In the case of the Qur'ān, however, no discovery of an autograph has yet been made, neither one written by the Prophet himself nor by the scribes he may have had. Even early manuscripts of the Qur'ān are rare and their dating is controversial. There are, admittedly, some fragments of the Qur'ān written on papyrus or parchment dated by some scholars to the end of the 1st and the first half of the 2nd century AH, but these instances of dating are rejected by others and have not yet found general acknowledgment.[1]) Additionally, the fragmentary character of most of the oldest Qur'ānic manuscripts does not allow us to conclude with certainty that the earliest Qur'āns must have had the exact same form, size and content as the later ones. Thus, manuscripts do not seem to be helpful (as yet) concerning our issue.

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[1]) Cf. O. Pretzl, 'Die Koranhandschriften', in: Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, part 3, Leipzig 1938², 249–274. A. Grohmann, 'The Problem of Dating Early Qur'āns', in: *Der Islam* 33 (1958), 213–231 and A. Neuwirth, 'Koran', in: H. Gätje (ed.), *Grundriß der arabischen Philologie*, vol. 2, Wiesbaden 1987, 112. Perhaps the Qur'ānic fragments found in Yemen in 1972 (cf. G.-R. Puin, 'Observations on Early Qur'ān Manuscripts in Ṣan'ā'', in: S. Wild (ed.), *The Qur'ān as Text*, Leiden 1996, 107–111) will produce specimens which can be dated with more certainty.

What about the text itself? Does the Qur'ān contain clear indications as to its author or its collectors? This is a controversial question, too. There are only very few concrete historical facts mentioned in the Qur'ān.[2]) In most cases we are not able to grasp from the text itself what the historical circumstances are to which the text seems to refer.[3]) The name Muḥammad is mentioned only four times and always in the third person.[4]) Usually the text is only concerned with someone called 'the messenger' or 'the Prophet', who as a rule is taken to be this same Muḥammad in most places. However, it can be and has been argued that the person addressed in the Qur'ān in the second person singular is not necessarily always the messenger (and there are a few instances where this clearly cannot be the case), but can also be regarded in many places as the reader or reciter of the text in general.[5]) If such a point of view is adopted, the issue of Muḥammad's authorship or transmission of the entire Qur'ān becomes questionable.

JOHN WANSBROUGH advocated emphatically such a thesis in his *Quranic Studies*. He concluded on the basis of form-critical and other arguments that the Qur'ān had emerged out of pericopes of prophetic *logia* which developed independently during the first two Islamic centuries in Mesopotamia. The canonical collection, i.e., the Qur'ān as it now exists, cannot be dated, according to WANSBROUGH, before the beginning of the third century AH. Consequently, the Qur'ān loses much of its quality as a reliable historical source for Muḥammad's lifetime and environment and becomes instead a source for the development of one type of religious literature of the early Islamic communities elsewhere.[6]) WANSBROUGH's conclusions can be and have been criticized for several reasons[7]) and only a few scholars have accepted his views. Nevertheless,

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[2]) Cf. for a collection N. ROBINSON, *Discovering the Qur'an*, London 1996, 30–31.

[3]) Cf. for a summary of the Qur'ānic historical framework M. COOK, *Muhammad*, Oxford 1983, 69–70.

[4]) Some scholars have even suggested that the four verses were later additions, e.g. H. HIRSCHFELD, *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, London 1902, 139.

[5]) As argued by A. RIPPIN in, 'Muḥammad in the Qur'ān: Reading Scripture in the 21st Century', in: H. MOTZKI (ed.), *"The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources"*, Leiden 2000, 298–309.

[6]) J. WANSBROUGH, *Qur'anic Studies*, Oxford 1977, 1–52.

[7]) Cf. the reviews by G.H.A. JUYNBOLL, in: *Journal of Semitic Studies* 24 (1979), 293–296; W.A. GRAHAM, in: *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 100 (1980), 137–141; A. NEUWIRTH, in: *Die Welt des Islams* 23–24 (1984), 539–542.

his contribution has reminded us that on the basis of the Qur'ānic text alone Muḥammad's 'authorship' of the whole text is difficult, if not impossible to prove.[8])

It seems then that the confidence of those scholars who believe that the Qur'ān is the collection of Muḥammad's revelations must be founded on something else. The only source which remains, if we exclude non-empirical sources of knowledge, is the Islamic tradition. 'Islamic tradition' is to be understood in a broad sense to include exegetical and historical traditions of any kind which purport to give background information on the Qur'ān and its details or are thought to provide such information. These sources, which are found in different types of literature, *tafsīr*, *sīra*, collections of *sunan* or of historical traditions, can be labeled Ḥadīth.

We are faced here with a paradox in modern Western Islamic studies. Most Western scholars are highly skeptical about the historical reliability of the Ḥadīth but nevertheless accept on the basis of *ḥadīth* reports that the Qur'ān is the revelation preached by Muḥammad and that it reflects the historical circumstances of his life. Even scholars such as Ignaz Goldziher and Joseph Schacht, who regarded most *ḥadīth* reports as fictitious and without any historical value for the time which they purport to reflect, did not contest the view that the Qur'ān went back to Muḥammad and they regarded it as the most reliable source of his life and preaching. This inconsistent position has been abandoned only recently by the followers of Schacht's radical opinions on the Ḥadīth such as Wansbrough, Michael Cook, Patricia Crone, Andrew Rippin, Gerald Hawting and others. They doubt that the Islamic tradition can be a historically reliable frame of reference for the Qur'ān, because it is generally uncertain whether the information in reports on Qur'ānic items is based on real knowledge independent of the Qur'ānic text itself and free of later apologetic, dogmatic and juridical preoccupations. Consequently, they also question the general conviction that the Qur'ān as a whole is a contemporary record of Muḥammad's utterances.

Is this the only way to escape the paradox? The obvious alternative would be to insist on the historical reliability of the Islamic tradition, at least in its essential points. This is the position which e.g. W. Montgomery Watt has adopted in assuming that the *Sīra* contains 'a basic core of material which is sound' and in thinking that 'it would be impossible to

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[8]) Cf. the contributions in H. Berg (ed.), 'Islamic Origins Reconsidered: John Wansbrough and the Study of Early Islam', in: *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 9/1 (Special Issue) 1997 for positive judgments of Wansbrough's studies.

make sense of the historical material of the Qur'ān without assuming the truth of this core'.[9]) But how can we know what the true core of the *sīra* tradition is? WATT's poor methodology in answering this question and in dismissing SCHACHT's objections to the Ḥadīth as not being applicable to the *sīra* material has not convinced critical minds and has brought upon himself the reproach of being gullible. To avoid such a reproach, scholars who are prepared to accept that the Qur'ān contains Muḥammad's preaching and thus to concede to the Islamic tradition a certain value, too, cannot but tackle the issue of the reliability of the Islamic traditions again. In the last decade several scholars – myself included – have devoted themselves to this task. I have designed different strategies to cope with the problem: a) a critical revaluation of the studies which deny to the *ḥadīth* reports a historical value for the first century, and b) an improvement of the methods to analyze and date traditions. Both strategies can be employed either on a more general level, e.g. concerning certain types of traditions, such as exegetical or legal ones,[10]) or on a more specific level, e.g. with a single tradition or complex of traditions.[11]) In the following, I will explore the issue of the collection of the Qur'ān, an issue which is fundamental in assessing the authorship and date of the standard text. This paper can only sketch some aspects of the problems; a comprehensive discussion can be found in a more detailed study I am currently preparing on this issue.

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[9]) W. MONTGOMERY WATT, *Muhammad's Mecca*, Edinburgh 1988, 1.

[10]) Cf. for such an approach H. MOTZKI, *Die Anfänge der islamischen Jurisprudenz*, Stuttgart 1991; revised English edition: *The Origins of Islamic Jurisprudence. Meccan Fiqh before the Classical Schools,* Leiden 2001.

[11]) Examples are H. MOTZKI, 'Der Fiqh des -Zuhrī: die Quellenproblematik', in: *Der Islam* 68 (1991), 1–44; revised English edition: 'The Jurisprudence of Ibn Šihāb az-Zuhrī. A Source-critical Study', Nijmegen 2001, 1–55, http://webdoc.ubn.kun.nl/mono/m/motzki_h/juriofibs.pdf; idem, '*Quo vadis* Ḥadīṯ-Forschung?', in: *Der Islam* 73 (1996), 40–80, 193–231; revised English edition: 'Wither Ḥadīth Studies?', in: P. Hardy (ed.), *Traditions of Islam: Understanding, the Ḥadīth,* London 2002; idem, 'The Prophet and the Cat: On Dating Mālik's *Muwaṭṭa'* and Legal Traditions', in: *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 22 (1998), 18–83; and idem, 'The Murder of Ibn Abī l-Ḥuqayq: On the Origin and Reliability of some *Maghāzī*-Reports', in: idem (ed.), *The Biography of Muhammad: The Issue of the Sources*, Leiden 2000, 170–239.

II. The traditions on the collection of the Qur'ān

The Muslim point of view

According to current Muslim opinion, the canonical text of the Qur'ān as it now exists and has been found in manuscripts dating at least from the third century AH, possibly even from earlier times, came into being as follows: When the Prophet died, there was no complete and definitive collection of his revelations authorized by him. More or less extensive pieces of his revelation had been remembered by his followers and some had been partly written down on various materials by several persons. Shortly after his death, a first collection of everything was made by order of the first caliph Abū Bakr and it was written on leaves. The reason for this was that several Companions who were famous for their knowledge of the Qur'ān had died during the *ridda* wars, and people were afraid that parts of the Qur'ān might become lost. Abū Bakr gave Zayd b. Thābit, a former scribe of the Prophet, the task to collect what was available of the Qur'ān. When Abū Bakr died, the leaves on which Zayd had written the Qur'ān passed to the former's successor ʿUmar and after his death to his daughter Ḥafṣa, one of the wives of Muḥammad. Some 20 years after Abū Bakr's collection, during the caliphate of ʿUthmān, dissension between followers of other collections induced the caliph to issue an official collection of the Qur'ān, to deposit a copy in the most important administrative centers of the empire and to suppress other existing collections. This canonical version was again edited by the Medinan Zayd b. Thābit, helped by three men from Qur'aysh, on the basis of the collection he had already made on Abū Bakr's behalf which Ḥafṣa put at the disposal of the committee. This caliphal edition of the Qur'ān, *al-muṣḥaf al-ʿuthmānī*, became quickly universally accepted and thus the *textus receptus* among Muslims.[12])

The opinions of Western scholars

In the first substantial Western study of the Qur'ān, Theodor Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Qorâns*, published in 1860, the author adopted the Muslim standard account of the history of the Qur'ān. In the last decades of the 19th century, however, doubts raised by Western scholars with re-

[12]) Many authors can be cited for the Muslim standard account of the history of Qur'ān. I confine myself to a fairly recent one: Ghānim Qaddūrī al-Ḥamad, *Rasm al-muṣḥaf*, Baghdad 1402/1982, 100–128.

gard to the historical reliability of the traditions concerning the time of the Prophet and the early history of Islam multiplied. Instrumental in this development were the studies by I. GOLDZIHER on the Ḥadīth published in 1890 in the second volume of his *Muhammedanische Studien*. In this famous work, GOLDZIHER advanced the thesis that the *ḥadīth*s which allegedly report on the Prophet and his Companions cannot, as a rule, be taken as historically authentic, for they reflect the political, dogmatic and juridical developments of the Muslim community at a later time (Umayyad and ʿAbbāsid periods).[13]) This suspicion by Western scholarship of the Muslim tradition which originated around the turn of the century found expression in the revised edition of NÖLDEKE's *Geschichte des Qorāns* of which the first two volumes were prepared by FRIEDRICH SCHWALLY.[14]) He wrote a completely new and more detailed study on the issue of the collection of the Qur'ān,[15]) and his conclusions differed substantially from those of NÖLDEKE.

SCHWALLY rejected the historical reliability of the report that there had already been a collection of the Qur'ān made shortly after the death of the Prophet on behalf of the first caliph Abū Bakr.[16]) His conclusion is based on the following arguments: 1) The connection which the report establishes between the collection and the heavy losses of experts of the Qur'ān in the battle of al-Yamāma is spurious for two reasons: on the one hand, the transmitted lists of Muslims killed in this battle contain only very few names of persons well known for their knowledge of the Qur'ān,[17]) and on the other hand, the connection is illogical because there is good reason to suppose that the Qur'ān had already been written down piecemeal-wise during Muḥammad's lifetime. The death of experts of the Qur'ān, i.e., people who knew it by heart, can therefore not have been the

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[13]) I. GOLDZIHER, *Muhammedanische Studien*, Halle 1889–90, vol. 2, passim.

[14]) Volume 1 was published in 1909, volume 2 in 1919, but was already finished in 1914.

[15]) 'Die Sammlung des Qorāns', in: TH. NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, part 2, Leipzig 1919², 1–121.

[16]) He gave a summary of his arguments in the article 'Betrachtungen über die Koransammlung des Abū Bekr', in: *Festschrift Eduard Sachau zum siebzigsten Geburtstage*, Berlin 1915, 321–325.

[17]) In his *Annali dell' Islam*, Milano 1906–26, vol. 2, 702–715, 738–754; and vol. 7, 388–418, L. CAETANI had already made reference to this contradiction and reached the conclusion that the tradition on a first compilation in the reign of Abū Bakr is a historically unreliable report which has been invented to justify the compilation of ʿUthmān.

reason for the decision to collect the Qur'ān; 2) Some reports differ as to the question whether the collection made on behalf of Abū Bakr and the official edition made during the caliphate of ʿUthmān were almost identical. SCHWALLY concludes from the contradiction that the authors of the reports had no real information going back to the time of the first caliphs, but made up their own minds about what had happened. Besides, he regards it as strange that ʿUthmān had appointed a committee to collect and edit the Qur'ān under the direction of Zayd b. Thābit if the latter had already collected and written down the text on leaves some years ago and if this text was used as the model which was only copied; 3) From the claim of the reports that the first collection had been instigated by the first caliph Abū Bakr and that he bequeathed his copy to his successor ʿUmar we must conclude that it was an official copy. This feature is contradicted, however, by reports which indicate that in the provinces collections made by other Companions were widely used and by the claim that ʿUmar bequeathed Abū Bakr's copy to his own daughter Ḥafṣa instead of to his successor ʿUthmān, which seems odd if it were a caliphal copy.

Based on these arguments, SCHWALLY concluded that the reports on a first collection of the Qur'ān for Abū Bakr were later inventions in order to give the collection brought together by the controversial ʿUthmān – disapproved of by a section of the Muslim community – more authority. The traditions concerning the official edition prepared for the third caliph, however, were accepted by SCHWALLY as historically reliable in substance, although he detected some inconsistent or improbable details as well, such as the claim that the Qur'ān had been revealed in the language, i.e., the dialect, of the Quraysh.[18])

Around the same time other scholars took a more radical view and rejected even the historicity of an official collection in the time of ʿUthmān. PAUL CASANOVA was the first to claim that the Qur'ān was not collected and officially promulgated before the caliphate of the Umayyad ʿAbd al-Malik and that this had been done on the initiative of his notorious governor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf.[19]) This view was adopted and substantiated in more detail by ALPHONSE MINGANA in his article *'The transmission of the Kur'ān'*.[20]) His arguments were: 1) The earliest record about the compilation of the Qur'ān is transmitted by IBN SAʿD (d. 229/844) in his *Ṭabaqāt*, about 200 years after the death of Muḥammad. About the oral

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[18]) SCHWALLY, 'Sammlung', 11–27, 47–62.

[19]) P. CASANOVA, *Mohammed et la fin du monde*, Paris 1911, 103–142, 162.

[20]) Published in: *Journal of the Manchester Egyptian and Oriental Society* 5 (1915–1916), 25–47.

transmission of *ḥadīth* reports during these two centuries we have no reliable information; 2) IBN SA'D transmits reports on Companions who collected the Qur'ān during the lifetime of the Prophet and during the caliphate of 'Umar. He has nothing about a collection on behalf of Abū Bakr or of 'Uthmān; 3) We learn about the latter only from the *ḥadīth* compilation of AL-BUKHĀRĪ, who died a quarter of a century after IBN SA'D, and from later compilations. According to MINGANA, there is no reason to prefer the younger reports of AL-BUKHĀRĪ above the earlier ones of IBN SA'D, as Muslim and Western scholars tend to do. Moreover, the reports which these earliest compilations contain on the topic are so mixed up and contradictory that it is impossible to decide which of them can be credited. In view of the historical unreliability of the *ḥadīth* material, MINGANA proposes to look for sources outside the Islamic tradition. He propounds that some Syrian-Christian sources are more suitable for historical purposes because they are earlier than the Muslim ones. MINGANA enumerates the following sources:

1) 'The dispute between 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ and the Monophysite Patriarch of Antioch, John I', which took place and was recorded in the year 18 (639); 2) a letter written in the first years of 'Uthmān's caliphate by the bishop of Nineveh, later known as Isho'yahb III, Patriarch of Seleucia, and referring to the Muslims; 3) an account on the Muslims written by an anonymous Christian in the year 60/680; and 4) the chronicle of JOHN BAR PENKĀYĒ written in 70/690, in the first years of the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik. MINGANA argues that in all these sources of the 1st/7th century there is no hint of any sacred Islamic Book when they describe or mention the Muslims and their faith. The same is true, according to him, concerning the writings of historians and theologians of the beginning of the 2nd/8th century. 'It is only towards the end of the first quarter of this [the 2nd/8th H.M.] century that the Qur'ān became the theme of conversation in Nestorian, Jacobite, and Melchite ecclesiastical circles.'[21]) MINGANA concludes from these facts that an official Qur'ān cannot have existed before the end of the 7th century AD.

As one of the earliest non-Muslim accounts of the history of the Qur'ān MINGANA quotes a passage from the 'Apology' of the Christian faith written by AL-KINDĪ around 830 AD, some forty years before AL-BUKHĀRĪ.[22]) In this text, a first collection during the caliphate of Abū Bakr is mentioned (another reason for it is given, however), and an official edition on 'Uthmān's behalf is described in a similar way as in the reports

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[21]) A. MINGANA, 'Transmission', 39.

[22]) Op. cit., 40.

transmitted by AL-BUKHĀRĪ. AL-KINDĪ ends by saying that the existing copies of the Qur'ān were collected and revised by order of ʿAbd al-Malik's governor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf who 'caused to be omitted from the text a great many passages', then had six new copies written and distributed to the main administrative centers of the provinces. He destroyed the earlier copies as ʿUthmān had done before. According to AL-KINDĪ, his account is based completely on Muslim authorities.

Combining his findings from Christian sources, MINGANA concludes that there may have existed several individual collections of the Qur'ān, even one for ʿUthmān, but not an official edition before the time of the Umayyad caliph ʿAbd al-Malik when the Qur'ān became collected and edited on the basis of existing written and orally preserved material under the supervision of his governor al-Ḥajjāj.[23])

For many decades this radical view was not adopted by most Western scholars, who followed the more moderate position of SCHWALLY, a few even that of NÖLDEKE which coincided with the dominant Muslim tradition.[24]) This situation changed when in 1950 JOSEPH SCHACHT's book *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* was published. In this study the author tried to prove definitively GOLDZIHER's thesis that most *ḥadīth* reports are historically unreliable. His conclusions were even more general and radical in stating that the legally relevant traditions concerning the Prophet and his Companions were generally fictitious and had been fabricated during the 2nd century AH or later when early Muslim legal scholars developed their doctrines. Although SCHACHT had developed his ideas on the basis of legal *ḥadīth*s, he did not limit his theory to this type of tradition but thought it applicable to other sorts as well. SCHACHT's views concerning the Ḥadīth impressed most Western scholars and in the decades following the publication of his book skepticism became a major factor in the Western study of early Islam. The issue of the collection of the Qur'ān did not escape this trend. In

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[23]) Op. cit., 46. MINGANA's approach and his conclusion concerning the dating of the Qur'ān reappear some 60 years later in P. CRONE/M. COOK, *Hagarism. The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge 1977, 3 and chapter 1, passim. MINGANA's article is, however, not mentioned by them.

[24]) Cf. N. ABBOTT, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script and its Kur'ānic Development*, Chicago 1939, 47ff. A. JEFFERY, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān*, Leiden 1937, 4–10. W. MONTGOMERY WATT: *Bell's Introduction to the Qur'ān*, Edinburgh 1970, 40–44. A. WELCH, 'Ḳur'ān', in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Leiden 1954ff., vol. 5, 404f. R. BLACHERE, *Introduction au Coran*, Paris 1977², 27–34, 52–62.

1977 two studies were published which dealt with this problem, JOHN WANSBROUGH's *Quranic Studies* and JOHN BURTON's *Collection of the Qur'ān*.[25]) Both authors took the view of GOLDZIHER and SCHACHT as an axiomatic basis for their studies[26]) and came to the conclusion that all Muslim traditions concerning the collection and redaction of the Qur'ān are historically unreliable and must be regarded as projections of dogmatic or legal discussions from the end of the 2nd Islamic century onwards.

WANSBROUGH based his view not on an investigation of the relevant traditions themselves but on SCHACHT's results as well as a form-analytical study of the Qur'ān and the Muslim exegetical literature. According to him, the structure of the Qur'ān in the form available now 'characterized by variant traditions, ellipsis and repetition are such to suggest not the carefully executed work of one or more men, but rather the product of an organic development from originally independent traditions during a long period of transmission'.[27]) These traditions can be thought of as pericopes of prophetic *logia* which had been orally transmitted over a longer period of time and finally grew together into a canon. The end of this process, the canonization, cannot have happened earlier than the end of the 2nd century AH. 'Establishment of a standard text such as is implied by the ʿUthmānic recension traditions can hardly have been earlier.'[28]) Accordingly, those and other traditions about the early collection of the Qur'ān must be regarded not as historically reliable reports, but as fictions which served certain purposes. These reports may have been created by legal scholars, as proposed by BURTON, in order to explain legal doctrines that are not found in the canon, and/or may have been modeled on rabbinical accounts of the establishment of the original text *('Urtext')* of the Pentateuch and the canonization of the Hebrew scripture. They presuppose the canon and can therefore not be dated earlier than the 3rd Islamic century.[29])

BURTON presented in his book *Collection of the Qur'ān* a detailed investigation of the relevant Muslim traditions themselves. He tried to show that these traditions derive from the discussions among the *uṣūl* scholars on the authority of the two main sources of Islamic jurisprudence, the Qur'ān and the *sunna* of the Prophet, and on the issue of ab-

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[25]) J. WANSBROUGH, *Quranic Studies*, Oxford 1977. J. BURTON, *Collection of the Qur'ān*, Cambridge 1977.

[26]) Cf. their introductory chapters.

[27]) WANSBROUGH, *Quranic Studies*, 47.

[28]) Op. cit., 44.

[29]) Op. cit., 43–52. WANSBROUGH refers here to articles by BURTON published before 1977.

rogation (*naskh*) of Qur'ānic verses. All the traditions on collections of the Qur'ān after the death of Muḥammad are therefore fictitious. According to BURTON, neither a collection on Abū Bakr's behalf nor an official edition made by order of ʿUthmān has ever existed. What were the motives of the legal scholars to invent different collections and to claim that the existant Qur'ān was the result of an incomplete redaction of the revelations made during ʿUthmān's caliphate? BURTON thought that Muslim legal scholars needed an incomplete Qur'ānic text because there were established legal practices which had no base in the Qur'ān and had been disputed for that reason. To save them they claimed that they were supported by revelations which had not found their way into the Qur'ān as it was. Such a view presupposed that the Prophet had not left his revelations in a definitively collected form. To substantiate this supposition the scholars invented reports about the existence of different pre-canonical collections and, in order to explain that there was actually only one Qur'ān, they also promoted the idea of an incomplete official edition made on ʿUthmān's behalf. If all the traditions on different Qur'ānic collections and codices are spurious, the only historically reliable fact remaining is the Qur'ān itself. BURTON assumed that this Qur'ān had been left by Muḥammad himself in the form as we know it today.[30]) BURTON did not explicitly say when the many Muslim traditions concerning the collection of the Qur'ān came into being. His idea, however, that they are the result of a discourse between *uṣūl* scholars and the fact that he adheres to SCHACHT's theories on the development of Islamic jurisprudence point to a time from the beginning of the 3rd century AH onwards. This dating coincides roughly with that of WANSBROUGH and MINGANA.

This is in a very condensed form the history of research done by Western scholars on the issue of the collection of the Qur'ān. This history is characterized by the growing tendency to depreciate the historical value of Muslim traditions concerning the issue and to replace them by other sources and by their own theories by which they try to explain how the Qur'ānic text as it is now and how the Muslim view on its history came into being. The four main scholars who investigated the issue in this century came to completely different conclusions with regard to the date when the canonical collection took place: SCHWALLY dated it in the time of the third caliph ʿUthmān, MINGANA in the caliphate of ʿAbd al-Malik at the end of the first Islamic century, WANSBROUGH at the beginning of the 3rd century and BURTON in the lifetime of Muḥammad.

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[30]) BURTON, *Collection*, 105–240 and passim.

In view of this variance we may wonder what the differences are between the theories of Western and Muslim scholars on this issue. Are the Western models of interpretation more plausible than the Muslim reports? Are they free of the prejudices of which the Muslim scholars are suspected? Do the Western studies differ from Muslim tradition because of a special scientific quality which makes them superior to the alleged unscientific and dogmatically biased Muslim view? To answer these questions a critical evaluation of the different studies is called for. I limit myself here to some critical comments on each of them.

In his detailed study of Muslim traditions concerning the collection of the Qur'ān, SCHWALLY tried to separate the historically reliable reports from the unreliable ones. He compared the contents of the different reports with one another, with historical information on the events and persons mentioned in the texts, and with the Qur'ān itself, and decided by virtue of this comparison whether a report or some of its details should be labeled reliable, tendentious or spurious. Such an approach is not without danger. The crucial question is whether the points of comparison which are considered historical facts are really unquestionable. SCHWALLY started, for instance, from the assumption that two facts cannot be doubted: firstly, that the known text of the Qur'ān contains the revelations of Muḥammad (whether completely or not is of secondary importance in this context), and secondly, that this text is the result of an official edition made by order of the third caliph ʿUthmān. The reasons SCHWALLY gave for his fixed points were that they were universally recognized and uncontested.[31]) This is, surely, not a very secure starting-point: unanimity on a scholarly issue is a temporary phenomenon. In any case, the historicity of ʿUthmān's official edition had been questioned before SCHWALLY by CASANOVA and would be debated afterwards by MINGANA, WANSBROUGH and BURTON, while the assumption that the Qur'ān is nothing more than the collection of Muḥammad's revelations has since been contested by WANSBROUGH and others. In addition, SCHWALLY's method of contrasting one piece of information with another often seems to be arbitrary. To give an example: In the complex of traditions on the first collection made for Abū Bakr, SCHWALLY detects a contradiction: on the one hand, it is reported that the first collection was made for the caliph and had been bequeathed by him to his successor ʿUmar, indicating that this collection already had an official status. On the other hand, it is said that ʿUmar bequeathed the *ṣuḥuf* of the Qur'ān to his daughter Ḥafṣa, which makes them a private possession. SCHWALLY

31) SCHWALLY, 'Betrachtungen', 324.

argues thus that only one of the claims can be historically true. He chooses the latter one because Ḥafṣa's *ṣuḥuf* play an important role in the traditions concerning ʿUthmān's official edition. He concludes then that Ḥafṣa's *ṣuḥuf* are a historically reliable detail; the whole history of these leaves as given by the traditions on Abū Bakr's collection is, however, in his view spurious. Yet we may wonder why internal contradictions induce SCHWALLY to reject the traditions concerning Abū Bakr's collection but not those reporting on ʿUthmān's official edition although the latter contain, according to him, several inconsistencies as well. Finally, it is remarkable that SCHWALLY admittedly collected the reports from a wide range of sources, early and later ones, and sometimes remarked on differences between the reports on the same event, but did not historically evaluate the different versions.[32])

Compared with SCHWALLY, MINGANA has a keener sense of the problem of dating the sources. Nevertheless, his approach proceeds from several axiomatic assumptions, which can be questioned: 1) The *ḥadīth* reports are historically unreliable because they were transmitted only orally; 2) The date of a report can be determined by the date of the compilation in which it first emerges. Thus, reports found in AL-BUKHĀRĪ's *Jāmiʿ* but not in IBN SAʿD's *Ṭabaqāt* are younger than those already appearing in the latter; 3) The material contained in later sources is as a rule less reliable than that of earlier ones and can be ignored; 4) Christian sources are more reliable than Muslim sources because they are earlier and written. Further weak points in MINGANA's article are: a) He makes heavy use of *argumenta e silentio*, e.g. when he concludes from the fact that the Qurʾān is not mentioned in the few early Christian sources reporting on the Muslims, that there was no officially recognized Qurʾān during the first Islamic century; b) A comparison of the account which the Christian AL-KINDĪ gave of the history of the Qurʾān with the Muslim traditions is lacking. Such a comparison would have revealed that the Christian account is a distorted summary of several Muslim traditions and that MINGANA's dating of the Muslim traditions is erroneous.

WANSBROUGH rejected the traditions concerning the collection and editing of the Qurʾān without investigating them for two reasons: 1) They were in contradiction with his view on the history of the Qurʾānic text, which resulted from a structural analysis of the Qurʾān and a typological investigation of the Muslim exegetical literature, and 2) he thought that the

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[32]) For other valuable arguments against SCHWALLY's views cf. A. JONES, 'The Qurʾān – II', in: A.F.L. BEESTON and others (eds.), *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, Cambridge 1983, 235–239.

historical unreliability of the Muslim traditions concerning the first century had been sufficiently proven by SCHACHT. The present article is not the right place to deal with these two issues. Some critical comments concerning WANSBROUGH's methods can be found in several reviews written on his *Quranic Studies*.[33]) The reservations which can be made with regard to SCHACHT's views concerning the development of Islamic jurisprudence and the Ḥadīth are treated in detail in several recent publications.[34])

A historical dimension is completely lacking in BURTON's study of the traditions concerning the collection of the Qur'ān. He arranges the different traditions to create a discourse which he thinks took place between scholars over a longer period of time. He regards some reports as reactions to others and thus to be dated later; he speaks of secondary and tertiary stages of development; but on the whole this discourse looks rather artificial, although not implausible. The few absolute data which BURTON gives in his study suggest that the entire process of development took place in the 3rd Islamic century. However, BURTON did not try to check whether his scheme of evolution is historically corroborated by the sources. He uses preferably very late sources such as AL-SUYŪṬĪ's *Itqān fī ʿulūm al-Qur'ān* and IBN ḤAJAR's *Fatḥ al-bārī* without asking himself whether some of the traditions may already be contained in earlier works and can be dated more accurately, perhaps even before the 3rd century AH.

The preceding critical comments on Western studies dealing with the issue of the collection of the Qur'ān make clear that premises, conclusions and methodology of these studies are still disputable. Whether their alternative views on the history of the Qur'ān are historically more reliable than the Muslim tradition on the issue thus remains an open question.

III. The traditions concerning the collection of the Qur'ān in light of recent methodological developments

In the last two decades the study of Ḥadīth has made considerable progress. This is due on the one hand to a great number of new sources which have become available and on the other hand to developments in the

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33) E.g. the reviews by JUYNBOLL, GRAHAM and NEUWIRTH.

34) Cf. H. MOTZKI, *Die Anfänge*; idem, 'Der Fiqh des -Zuhrī'; idem, 'The *Muṣannaf* of ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Ṣanʿānī as a Source of Authentic *Aḥādīth* of the First Century A.H.', in: *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50 (1991), 1–21; and idem, 'Dating Muslim Traditions. A Survey', in: P. Hardy (ed.), *Traditions of Islam: Understanding the Ḥadīth*, London 2002.

field of methodology. Among the new sources, the pre-canonical collections such as the *Muṣannaf*s of ʿABD AL-RAZZĀQ and IBN ABĪ SHAYBA or ʿUMAR B. SHABBA's *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna* and many others have proved to be of prime importance.[35]) In the sphere of methodology, two developments must be noticed: 1) The *isnād* analysis of single traditions has been worked out to become a powerful research tool. This is in the first place to the credit of G.H.A. JUYNBOLL.[36]) 2) The *matn* analysis of *ḥadīth*s has been improved by investigating the textual variants of a tradition and by combining this approach with an *isnād* analysis. Among the scholars working in this direction, JUYNBOLL, GREGOR SCHOELER and myself can be mentioned.[37])

The results which these methodological approaches have produced so far make their application to the traditions concerning the collection of the Qurʾān desirable. I presented my first observations on this issue already some years ago at an international Ḥadīth colloquium held in Amsterdam in 1991 and summarized them subsequently in an article written in Dutch.[38]) Since then new sources have become available to me which make it desirable to update my earlier ideas, although the main conclusions remain the same.

Dating without isnāds

Previous Western studies of the issue had to cope with the fact that the earliest source from which the traditions concerning the history of the *muṣḥaf* was known is a rather late one, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ* of AL-BUKHĀRĪ (d. 256/870). The long interval of roughly 200 years between the alleged events and the recording of the corresponding reports in a written source

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35) ʿABD AL-RAZZĀQ B. HAMMĀM AL-ṢANʿĀNĪ, *al-Muṣannaf*, 11 vols., Beirut 1391/1972, 1983[2]. IBN ABĪ SHAYBA, *al-Kitāb al-muṣannaf fī l-aḥādīth wa-l-āthār*, 15 vols, Hyderabad 1386–1403/1966–1983. ʿUMAR B. SHABBA, *Taʾrīkh al-madīna al-munawwara*, 4 vols., Jidda n.d.

36) Cf. his 'Some *Isnād*-Analytical Methods Illustrated on the Basis of Several Woman-Demeaning Sayings from *Ḥadīth* Literature', in: *al-Qantara* 10 (1989), 343–384.

37) Cf. G.H.A. JUYNBOLL, 'Early Islamic Society as Reflected in its Use of *Isnād*s', in: *Le Muséon* 107 (1994), 151–194. G. SCHOELER, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds*, Berlin/New York 1996. H. MOTZKI, '*Quo vadis* Ḥadīṯ-Forschung?'; idem, 'The Prophet and the Cat'.

38) H. MOTZKI, 'De tradities over het ontstaan van de korantekst: verzinsel of waarheid?', in: M. BUITELAAR/H. MOTZKI (eds.), *De koran: ontstaan, interpretatie en praktijk*, Muiderberg 1993, 12–29.

induced MINGANA to reject them as historically unreliable, and the late date of appearance of these reports fitted marvelously with WANSBROUGH's and BURTON's assumptions that they had been created in the first half of the 3rd century AH at the earliest. However, even on the basis of the sources available until 1977 it can be shown that the assumption that AL-BUKHĀRĪ is the earliest source for the reports in question is erroneous, and the sources which became available since then corroborate this.

Let us first examine the situation of the early Muslim sources in which a collection made on Abū Bakr's behalf is mentioned. I start with AL-BUKHĀRĪ, the most frequently cited source. If in AL-BUKHĀRĪ's *Jāmiʿ* one report on Abū Bakr's collection were to be found, the conclusion that al-Bukhārī himself might have invented the story or may have taken it from someone else who had fabricated it would be difficult to disprove. We find, however, not one, but four different accounts in his *Jāmiʿ*,[39]) a fact already noticed by NÖLDEKE in 1860.[40]) The impact of this peculiarity on the dating of the reports has so far been overlooked. A careful analysis of the *matn*s of the four versions (three detailed and one shortened one) shows that the differences between them are many and varied. How can we explain them? Is it plausible to assume that AL-BUKHĀRĪ purposely created the different versions? For what reason? Could it be that he received a single version from one person, be it the fabricator or not, but later could not remember exactly what he had heard and therefore retold it in three different ways? Against the latter assumption we note that AL-BUKHĀRĪ ascribes the four versions to different informants and that he makes explicit note of cases in which he is not sure what the precise wording of his informant had been and gives an alternative. This seems to reflect a careful transmission of the texts he had received. Thus it seems more plausible to conclude from the different versions that AL-BUKHĀRĪ received them from different persons who may be termed his teachers or informants and would most likely have belonged to the preceding generation. Because their reports are only slightly different versions of the same account, we must suppose a common source. If we leave the *isnād*s aside for the moment, this common source could be one of AL-BUKHĀRĪ's teachers or another contemporary from whom AL-BUKHĀRĪ's informants heard the tradition. We will see, however, that the common source is much earlier.

Our conclusion that different versions circulated among the generation before AL-BUKHĀRĪ is corroborated by earlier sources. Two ver-

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[39]) AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, Beirut 1992, 66:3; 65:9,20; 93:37.

[40]) TH. NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, Göttingen 1860, 190.

sions are found in IBN ḤANBAL's (d. 241/855) *Musnad*, one detailed and two shorter ones.[41]) The detailed version is very similar to those found in AL-BUKHĀRĪ but it is not identical with any of them. Moreover, IBN ḤANBAL's text is shorter than that of the former; he stops with Zayd b. Thābit's resistance to a collection of the Qur'ān and does not report that a collection was eventually made. This makes it probable that IBN ḤANBAL's version is independent from AL-BUKHĀRĪ's traditions and precludes that the latter has his version from the former. However, IBN ḤANBAL's traditions do not take us more than one generation earlier than AL-BUKHĀRĪ's. We may assume that IBN ḤANBAL received the tradition from his teachers, thus from the preceding generation, but without falling back on the *isnād* we cannot be sure of it. That the tradition is indeed much earlier is proved by the *Musnad* of AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ (d. 204/820).[42]) His text is similar to IBN ḤANBAL's long version in that it breaks off after Zayd's refusal to collect the Qur'ān but it is not identical to it nor to the relevant part of AL-BUKHĀRĪ's versions. This favors the assumption that AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ's tradition is independent and was not the model which IBN ḤANBAL and AL-BUKHĀRĪ copied, a conclusion corroborated by the *isnād*s which contain different informants for the texts in question (AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ has Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd, while IBN ḤANBAL and AL-BUKHĀRĪ's short version have Yūnus). At any rate, the fact that the tradition concerning the collection of the Qur'ān on Abū Bakr's behalf is found in AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ's *Musnad* brings the date when the tradition must have been in existence back to the end of the 2nd century AH.

What form did the tradition have at that time? I have suggested that they contained all the details which are found in AL-BUKHĀRĪ's long versions and that AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ's and IBN ḤANBAL's versions were truncated ones. At the colloquium in Amsterdam, P. Crone objected, opining that the shorter version which ignores the realization of Abū Bakr's project could be the original one which was improved upon later. In 1991 this objection could not be dismissed on the basis of the *matn* history. However, since then three sources have become available to me which prove that Crone's assumption is wrong. The first is the *Kitāb faḍā'il al-Qur'ān* written by ABŪ 'UBAYD B. AL-SALLĀM (d. 224/838)[43]) and a second one

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[41]) IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad*, Beirut 1993, vol. 1, 10 (no. 58), 13 (no. 77), vol. 5, 188–189 (no. 21700).

[42]) AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ, *Musnad*, Hyderabad 1321, 3.

[43]) ABŪ 'UBAYD AL-QĀSIM B. SALLĀM, *Faḍā'il al-Qur'ān*, Beirut 1411/1991, 152–156.

the *Tafsīr* of ʿABD AL-RAZZĀQ (d. 211/827).[44]) Both compilations contain versions which are as complete as those of AL-BUKHĀRĪ without being identical with one of them. A third important new source is the first part of *al-Jāmiʿ* written by ʿABD ALLĀH B. WAHB (d. 197/812) and published in 1992.[45]) Fragments of traditions are found in it which prove that the end of the report which is lacking in AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ's *Musnad* was already known in the last quarter of the 2nd Islamic century.[46]) This is the date that can at present be assigned to the tradition concerning Abū Bakr's collection of the Qur'ān by looking for the earliest sources in which it appears and by ignoring the *isnād*s of the different versions.

Until recently the dating of the tradition concerning ʿUthmān's official edition of the Qur'ān by the same method did not produce a comparable result. The text of the single complete version contained in AL-BUKHĀRĪ's *Jāmiʿ*[47]) could not be found in earlier sources. The possible conclusion that this tradition must be later than that on Abū Bakr's collection can be refuted, however, on the ground of two fragments of the tradition found also in AL-BUKHĀRĪ's *Jāmiʿ* which are obviously independent of the complete version, and several reports contained in IBN ḤANBAL's *Musnad* and IBN SAʿD's *Ṭabaqāt*, which presuppose the existence of a tradition on ʿUthmān's official edition at least in the generation before AL-BUKHĀRĪ.[48]) The sources mentioned above which recently became available to me prove now that this tradition was known not only two generations before AL-BUKHĀRĪ (a version that is only slightly different is

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[44]) ʿABD AL-RAZZĀQ AL-ṢANʿĀNĪ, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-ʿazīz*, vol. 1, Beirut 1411/1991, 57–58. The edition does not reproduce the text of the manuscript (Cairo, Dār al-Kutub, no. 242 *tafsīr*), of which the folios in question are almost unreadable, wholly correctly, however. The edition gives the text of Mūsā b. Ismāʿīl (cf. AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Jāmiʿ*, 66:3), whereas the manuscript has the version of Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh [Abū Thābit] (cf. op. cit.: 93:37). The correct version is reproduced in the new edition by Maḥmūd Muḥammad ʿAbduh (Beirut 1999), vol. 1, 249. In the edition by Muṣṭafā Muslim Muḥammad, published in al-Riyāḍ 1989, which also used this manuscript, the text of the first tradition is lacking.

[45]) ʿABD ALLĀH B. WAHB, *al-Jāmiʿ. Die Koranwissenschaften*, Wiesbaden 1992, 13–18.

[46]) The manuscript on which the edition of AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ's *Musnād* is based belongs obviously to a bad transmission of his compilation; IBN ABĪ DĀWŪD transmits a complete version from al-Ṭayālisī in his *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, Leiden 1937, 6–7; see also IBN ḤAJAR, *Fatḥ al-bārī*, Beirut 1989, vol. 9, 17.

[47]) AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Jāmiʿ*, 66:3.

[48]) AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Jāmiʿ*, 66:2; 61:3. IBN ḤANBAL, *Musnad*, vol. 1, nos. 399, 499. IBN SAʿD, *Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt al-kabīr*, vol. II/2, Leiden 1905–17, 105.

contained in ABŪ ʿUBAYD's *Faḍāʾil*) but also in the last quarter of the 2nd century (according to both IBN SHABBA's version, which goes back to al-Ṭayālisī[49]) but is not contained in the edition of his *Musnad*, and the fragments found in IBN WAHB's *Jāmiʿ*).

Thus, our investigation has shown so far that by carefully studying the variants of the traditions in question, the latter can be dated earlier than usually supposed even on the basis of the limited sources which Western studies written up to 1977 had at their disposal. Additionally, the new sources which have become available since not only corroborate this conclusion but also allow us to fix a date *ante quem* by only taking into consideration the date when the compilers of the sources in question had died: The traditions on the history of the *muṣḥaf* must have been in circulation before the end of the 2nd century AH at the latest.

This provisional result, which can be further improved by *isnād* analysis, as we shall soon see, reveals the weaknesses of some of MINGANA's arguments and of the theories put forward by WANSBROUGH and BURTON concerning these traditions. MINGANA's claim that the account of the Christian AL-KINDĪ is earlier and therefore preferable to AL-BUKHĀRĪ's is erroneous. Even if AL-KINDĪ's letter actually originates from the time of the caliph al-Maʾmūn,[50]) its account of the history of the Qurʾān is clearly a distorted summary of the reports which we know from contemporary or earlier Muslim sources. Who is responsible for the distortion – AL-KINDĪ or his Muslim informants – cannot be ascertained. According to WANSBROUGH and BURTON, the traditions on the collection and official edition of the Qurʾān cannot have been created earlier than the 3rd Islamic century because they presuppose either the canonization of the text or the general establishment of the *uṣūl* theory which WANSBROUGH and BURTON cannot imagine to have come about before the end of the 2nd century AH. If these traditions circulated before that date, we must assume either that the canonization and establishment of the *uṣūl* theory occurred earlier than they supposed or that there is no connection between the traditions in question and the supposed two developments. In

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[49]) IBN SHABBA, *Taʾrīkh*, vol. 4, 992.

[50]) Authorship and dating of AL-KINDĪ's letter have been a matter of controversy for a long time. Although it is presented as written by a Christian senior official at the court of al-Maʾmūn, which induced W. MUIR in combination with some historical events mentioned in the text to date it to 215/830, some details of its content, however, were used by L. Massignon and P. Kraus to date it to roughly a century later. Cf. G. TROUPEAU, 'Al-Kindī, ʿAbd al-Masīḥ', in: *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., vol. 5, 120–121.

both cases crucial parts of their argument lose their plausibility. One way to escape this conclusion would be to claim that the sources in which the traditions first appear are not really compilations by their putative authors but by their pupils or by later generations. WANSBROUGH has used this argument in order to reconcile his theories on the development of Muslim exegesis with available sources. The late NORMAN CALDER recently followed him in dating several legal and *ḥadīth* compilations much later than hitherto supposed.[51]) However, these attempts to revise the date of all or most sources ascribed to Muslim authors of the 2nd and 3rd Islamic centuries are unconvincing, as I and others have shown in detail elsewhere.[52])

*Dating on the basis of isnāds and matn*s

The method to determine the date of traditions by the approximate date of the written sources in which they first appear results in late dates – in our case the last quarter of the 2nd century AH. This method consciously sidesteps the fact that the texts may have a history before they found their way into the sources which have been preserved. That they actually had a history has already become obvious from our investigation of the different *matn*s found in the early sources. The question is, however, whether there are methods to trace their history further back.

Usually *ḥadīth*s provide indications of their history in the form of the chains of transmitters. Since GOLDZIHER, most Western scholars do not trust *isnād*s and usually ignore them altogether. This was the case in all the studies which dealt with the issue of the collection of the Qur'ān. SCHACHT, however, argued that in spite of their partially fictitious character, *isnād*s could be used to discover the fabricator of a given tradition by comparing all its different *isnād*s and looking for their common link. His methodological suggestions have been picked up and further developed in the last twenty-five years so that we can speak of a methodology of *isnād* analysis. Even if some of its premises are still disputed, the method deserves the attention of historians concerned with early Islam.

The first step to establish a common link consists in compiling the *isnād*s of all versions of the same tradition which are found in different

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[51]) N. CALDER, *Studies in Early Muslim Jurisprudence*, Oxford 1993.

[52]) E.g. H. MOTZKI, 'The Prophet and the Cat'. M. MURANYI, 'Die frühe Rechtsliteratur zwischen Quellenanalyse und Fiktion', in: *Islamic Law and Society* 4 (1997), 224–241.

sources into a bundle. Ideally all available sources, even late ones, should be included. For our purposes, however, it will be sufficient to confine the sample of the sources to those of the 2nd and 3rd centuries AH. I shall analyze the collection of the Qur'ān on Abū Bakr's behalf first, and then the tradition concerning its official edition under ʿUthmān.[53])

The tradition concerning the collection made by order of the first caliph is found in so many sources and with so many *isnād*s that it is advisable for the sake of clarity to discuss them in two steps: firstly, the *isnād*s of the collections which were compiled up to 256/870 (the date of AL-BUKHĀRĪ's death), and secondly, those of the compilations whose authors lived until 316/929 (the date of death of the last compiler considered, IBN ABĪ DĀWŪD). The discussion is reproduced in the diagrams I and II.

In the first period the tradition is contained in six sources: AL-BUKHĀRĪ's *Jāmiʿ*, IBN ḤANBAL's *Musnad*, ABŪ ʿUBAYD's *Faḍā'il*, ʿABD AL-RAZZĀQ's *Tafsīr*, AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ's *Musnad*, and MŪSĀ B. ʿUQBA's *Maghāzī*.[54]) Whereas AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ and ʿABD AL-RAZZĀQ give only one version with its *isnād*, ABŪ ʿUBAYD mentions in addition two other very similar versions of which he gives only the *isnād*, IBN ḤANBAL produces two variants, a longer and a short one, and AL-BUKHĀRĪ gives four versions and three additional *isnād*s without *matn*. The six sources together produce 15 different transmission lines which all intersect in a single transmitter: Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742). This is the common link. Beneath it, a single strand reaches via Ibn al-Sabbāq to the alleged narrator of the tradition Zayd b. Thābit. Some transmission lines between the compilers of the sources and the common link are 'single strands', others cross with others and form 'partial common links' (pcls), terms introduced by JUYNBOLL in *isnād* analysis. On the level above the common link, two of the five transmitters from Zuhrī are such pcls: Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd[55]) by virtue of

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[53]) In this article, I confine the discussion to the dominant, i.e., most widespread and accepted, traditions on the issues in question. The other accounts which differ in structure and detail must be studied in the same manner.

[54]) Cf. the notes 41–45. MŪSĀ B. ʿUQBA's (d. 141/758) *Kitāb al-Maghāzī* is only known from fragments cited in later sources (a useful collection of these fragments has been published by MUḤAMMAD BĀQSHĪSH ABŪ MĀLIK, *al-Maghāzī li-Mūsā b. ʿUqba*, Agadir 1994). MŪSĀ's tradition on Abū Bakr's collection as preserved in IBN ḤAJAR, *Fatḥ*, vol. 9, 19 is only a summary. I omit IBN WAHB's *Jāmiʿ* because his fragments have either no *isnād* or one which belong to other fragments of a combined account.

[55]) Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd b. Ibrāhīm al-Zuhrī al-Madanī, d. 183/799 or 184/800; AL-DHAHABĪ, *Tadhkirat al-huffāẓ*, vol. 1, Hyderabad 1955, 252.

Diagram I: Abū Bakr's collection of the Qur'ān until al-Bukhārī

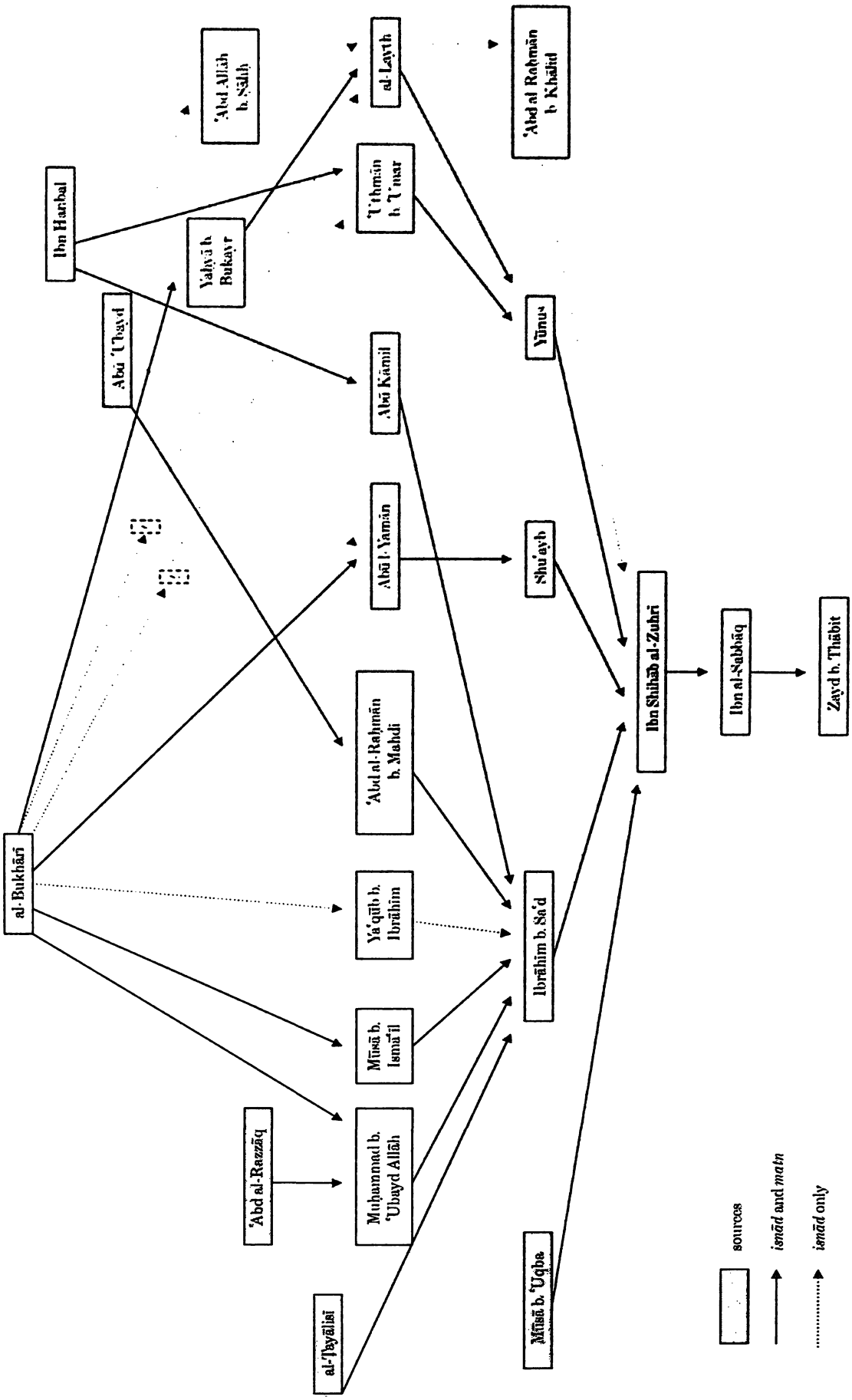


Diagram II: Abū Bakr's collection of the Qur'ān between al-Bukhārī and Ibn Abī Dāwūd

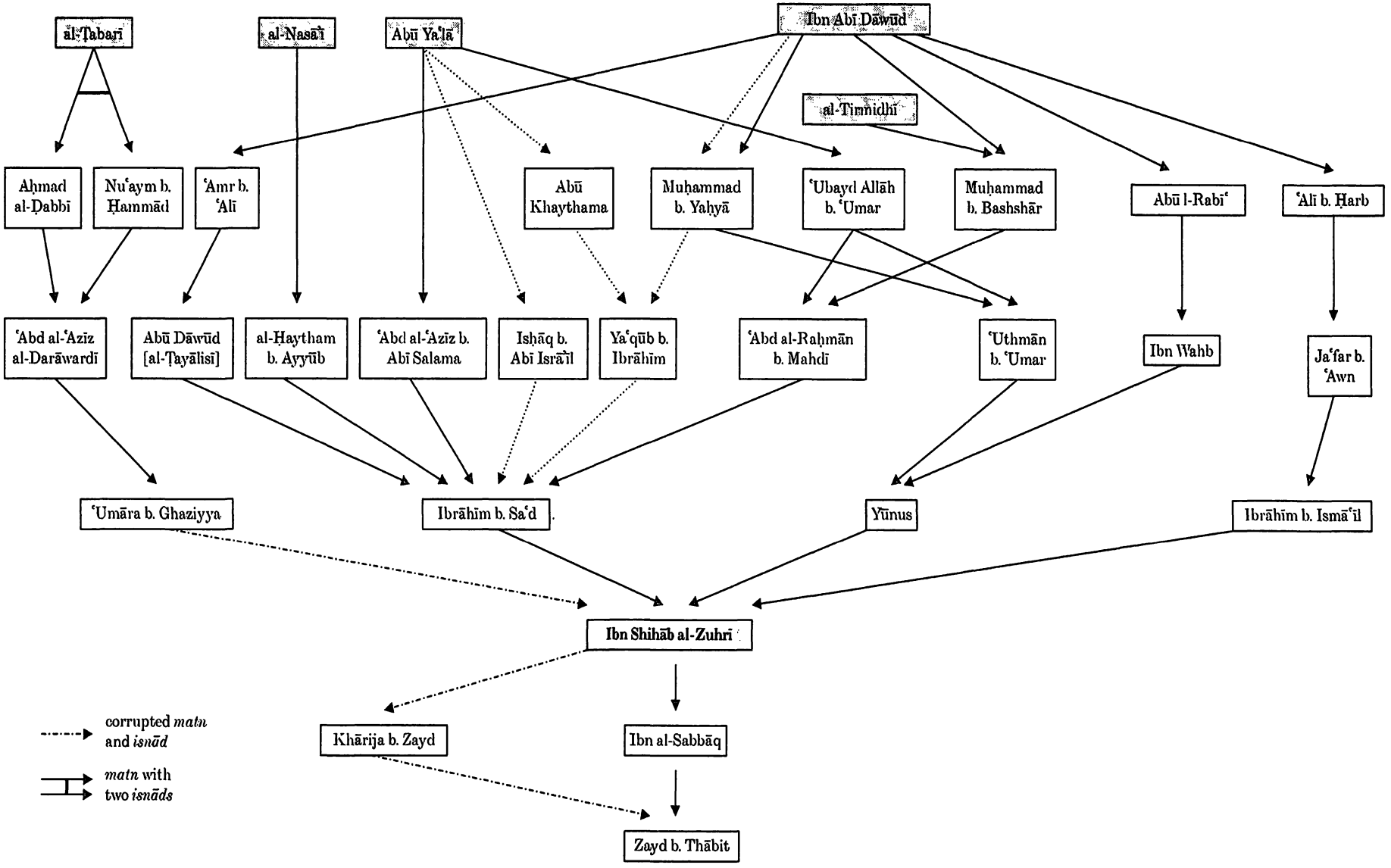
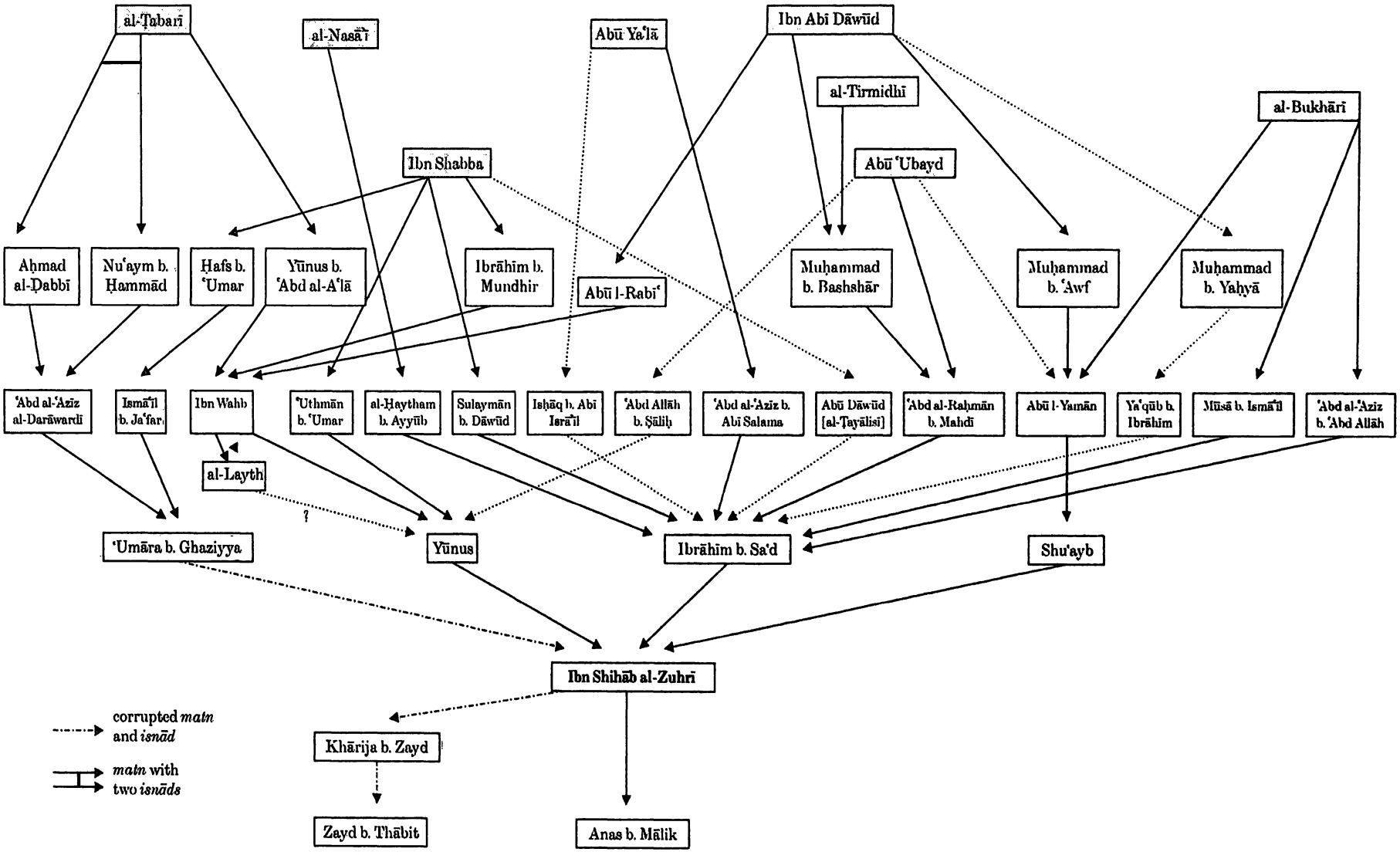


Diagram III: ʿUthmān's official edition of the Qur'ān until Ibn Abī Dāwūd



six persons who appear as transmitters from him (AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, Abū Kāmil, Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm, Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh and Mūsā b. Ismāʿīl), and Yūnus[56]) by virtue of two (al-Layth and ʿUthmān b. ʿUmar). Among the nine transmitters of the second generation above the common link, four pcls are found (Abū l-Yamān, al-Layth, ʿUthmān b. ʿUmar and Muḥammad b. ʿUbayd Allāh).

If we look at the collections that were compiled during the 60 years following AL-BUKHĀRĪ, the picture is similar. Here we have five sources in which the tradition is found: IBN ABĪ DĀWŪD's *Kitāb al-Maṣāḥif*, AL-ṬABARĪ's *Jāmiʿ*, ABŪ YAʿLĀ's *Musnad*, AL-NASĀʾĪ's *al-Sunan al-kubrā* and AL-TIRMIDHĪ's *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*,[57]) which produce 14 transmission lines. Again, all of them come together in Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī and then (with two exceptions)[58]) form a single strand with Ibn al-Sabbāq and Zayd b. Thābit. Two of the four transmitters on the level above the common link are pcls: Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd by virtue of six transmitters, and Yūnus by virtue of two. On the second level above the common link there are four pcls among the ten transmitters (al-Darāwardī, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī, Yaʿqūb b. Ibrāhīm and ʿUthmān b. ʿUmar).

If we combine the two bundles of diagrams I and II into a single one (which I have not reproduced in a separate diagram because it would be overcrowded), it shows 29 transmission lines which all intersect in the name of Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. This cannot be a pure coincidence. The question is, however, how this phenomenon can be explained. There are two possibilities: Firstly, the *isnād* bundle can reflect the real process of transmission. That would mean that the tradition in question does indeed go back to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī, who must be the 'source', i.e., the one who spread the tradition. Secondly, the common link could be the result of systematic forgery. Some Western scholars have posited a theory according to which someone of the second generation following Ibn Shihāb (e.g. AL-ṬAYĀLISĪ) could have brought the tradition with his *isnād* into circulation first. His peers took it over from him but they all con-

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[56]) Yūnus b. Yazīd al-Aylī, d. 152/769 or 159/776; Al-DHAHABĪ, *Tadhkira*, vol. 1, 162. IBN ḤIBBĀN, *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, vol. 7, Hyderabad 1981, 648–49.

[57]) IBN ABĪ DĀWŪD, *Maṣāḥif*, 6–8, 20, 23. AL-ṬABARĪ, *Jāmiʿ al-bayan ʿan taʾwīl āy al-Qurʾān*, vol. 1, Cairo 1954, 59–62. ABŪ YAʿLĀ, *Musnad*, Damascus and Beirut 1984, vol. 1, no. 63–65, 71, 91. AL-NASĀʾĪ, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, Beirut 1991, vol. 5, 7–8, 9, 78. AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, vol. 5, Cairo 1975², 48:10.

[58]) One exception is MŪSĀ B. ʿUQBA's tradition which only mentions Ibn Shihāb as informant but no further *isnād*; the second one is the tradition of ʿUmāra b. Ghaziyya which I will deal with below (see note 63).

cealed that he was their source. Some of them skipped him in their *isnād*s by referring directly to his alleged informant (e.g. Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd), others replaced his informant by another name (e.g. Yūnus).[59]) Later generations (e.g. 'ABD AL-RAZZĀQ, IBN ḤANBAL, AL-BUKHĀRĪ or AL-ṬABARĪ) could have gone further by inventing completely new transmission lines which imitated the existing ones and also intersected in the name of Ibn Shihāb.[60]) In this way Ibn Shihāb could have become a common link without having anything to do with the tradition fabricated two generations later.

The explanation of the common link phenomenon as a result of forgery has several shortcomings. Firstly, these types of forgery are only imagined. Admittedly, there are some cases which prove that such forgeries sometimes occurred, but there are no indications that this was the general manner in which *isnād*s developed systematically. Secondly, the assumption of forgery seems very manufactured in our particular case, i.e., in the *isnād* bundle described above, because it posits that a great number of transmitters and collectors of traditions must have used exactly the same procedure of forgery, although a number of other methods were theoretically possible. Thirdly, and most important, a comparative study of the *matn*s of all the transmission lines[61]) reveals a close connection between *matn* and *isnād*. The *matn*s can be classified in groups of similar texts. Each group differs from others with regard to some peculiarities. This phenomenon is not confined to the complex of traditions described above, but can be observed in many *ḥadīth*s.[62]) A similar phenomenon is well known from manuscript traditions where the manuscripts can often be classified as belonging to different stemmas. In the case of our tradition, it is striking that the different groups of *matn*s

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[59]) These possible kinds of forgery have been brought forward by M. COOK against the use of the common link for dating purposes. Cf. his *Early Muslim Dogma*, Cambridge 1981, 109–111.

[60]) G.H.A. JUYNBOLL used these assumptions to try to explain the occurrence of single strands in the *isnād* bundle. Cf. his 'Nāfi' the *Mawlā* of Ibn 'Umar, and his Position in Muslim *Ḥadīth* Literature', in: *Der Islam* 70 (1993), 207–244.

[61]) The number of *matn*s is 20; the remaining transmission lines are either connected with the *matn* of another *isnād* or not combined with a *matn* at all, but sometimes with remarks on similarities or differences with other versions. For lack of space, it was not possible to present a detailed analysis of the *matn* variants in this article; I shall deal with them in a separate publication.

[62]) Cf. MOTZKI, *'Quo vadis* Ḥadīṯ-Forschung?'; idem, *'The Prophet and the Cat'*; and idem, *'The Murder'*.

coincide with the different groups of *isnād*s. Formulated alternatively, there is a *matn* group of Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd, another one of Yūnus, etc. which differ characteristically from one another.[63])

The close connection between *matn*s and *isnād*s favors the assumption that the common link is the result of a real transmission process. The assumption of forgery would mean that the forgers not only fabricated new *isnād*s but also accordingly changed the texts very systematically. Admittedly, this could be imagined, too, but it seems rather unlikely that this occurred on a large scale.[64]) Thus, it seems more reasonable to interpret the common link as the common source for all the different versions which are found in our sources. This leaves us with Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī as the one who has circulated our tradition concerning the collection of the Qur'ān on Abū Bakr's behalf. Since al-Zuhrī died in 124/742 we can conclude that this tradition must have already been known in the first quarter of the second century AH.

The tradition concerning the official edition of the Qur'ān made by order of the third caliph 'Uthmān can be dated by means of the same method. Since I have already described the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis[65]) in some detail, I can be more concise now. This tradition is less represented in the early sources than that concerning Abū Bakr's collection. As far as I know, complete versions are only found in sources whose putative

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[63]) The *matn-cum-isnād* analysis reveals that the versions transmitted from Ibrāhīm b. Sa'd, Yūnus, Shu'ayb [b. Abī Ḥamza al-Ḥimṣī, d. 162/ 779 or 163/780] and Ibrāhīm b. Ismā'īl [b. Mujammi' b. Yazīd al-Madanī] are all similar in structure. The versions going back to 'Umāra b. Ghaziyya [al-Māzinī, d. 140/757–8], on the contrary, differ greatly from the other versions, not only in the *matn* but also in the *isnād* in which he gives Khārija, the son of Zayd b. Thābit, as al-Zuhrī's informant instead of Ibn al-Sabbāq. A close examination of 'Umāra's version shows that it is a new composition made on the basis of al-Zuhrī's account but deviating from him on several counts. The deviation in the *isnād* is adopted from two other traditions of al-Zuhrī which are concerned with the collection of the Qur'ān. That 'Umāra's account is not a reliable al-Zuhrī tradition has already been noticed by al-Khaṭīb and, following him, Ibn Ḥajar (cf. AL-ṬABARI, *Jāmi'*, vol. 1, 61, note by the editor).

[64]) I have given the reason why it seems unlikely in some detail in *'The Prophet and the Cat'*, note 44.

[65]) The difference between *isnād-cum-matn* and *matn-cum-isnād* analysis is that the former is essentially an *isnād*-analysis controlled by the *matn*s whereas the latter is in the first place a *matn*-analysis combined with the results of the *isnād*-analysis.

authors died in the 3rd century AH and later. I confine myself again to the authors living before 316/929. ABŪ ʿUBAYD's *Faḍā'il* has three transmission lines, IBN SHABBA's *Ta'rīkh al-Madīna* five, the *Jāmiʿ* of AL-BUKHĀRĪ three, AL-TIRMIDHĪ's *Jāmiʿ* and AL-NASĀ'Ī's *al-Sunan al-kubrā* each contain only one, ABŪ YAʿLĀ's *Musnad* two, AL-ṬABARĪ's *Jāmiʿ* three and IBN ABĪ DĀWŪD's *Maṣāḥif* four.[66]) All together, these eight sources contain 22 transmission lines of which 16 are provided with a *matn* (see diagram III). All *isnād*s intersect in the name Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī. On the level above him we find four transmitters. Three of them are partial common links: Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd by virtue of nine transmitters from him, Yūnus by virtue of three (perhaps four) and ʿUmāra b. Ghaziyya by virtue of two. The status of Ibn Shihāb as common link in the *isnād* bundle is solidly established and is also corroborated by a comparison of the different *matn*s which can be classified in groups which accord with the *isnād* filiations.[67]) We can conclude that the tradition concerning the official edition of the Qur'ān goes back to Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī.

The result of the *isnād-cum-matn* analysis is the following: The two traditions which tell the history of the *muṣḥaf* and are widely adopted in Muslim scholarship were both brought into circulation by Ibn Shihāb and can be dated to the first quarter of the 2nd century AH. The date of al-Zuhrī's death is then a *terminus post quem*.[68])

Is this the last word on the issue of dating? The answer to this question depends on the interpretation which is given to the common link in *isnād* bundles. This is a much-debated issue. SCHACHT, JUYNBOLL and others claim that the common link is the fabricator or originator of the

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[66]) ABŪ ʿUBAYD, *Faḍā'il*, 153–156 (in the tradition on p. 156, no. 10, the edition which is based on the manuscript preserved in Damascus, gives the name Maʿmar instead of Yūnus as informant of al-Layth. This is probably erroneous, because the two manuscripts of the *Faḍā'il* preserved in Tübingen and Berlin have Yūnus as has AL-BUKHĀRĪ's transmission from al-Layth). IBN SHABBA, *Ta'rīkh*, vol. 4, 991–993, 1002. AL-BUKHĀRĪ, *Jāmiʿ*, 61:3; 66:2; 66:3. AL-TIRMIDHĪ, *Jāmiʿ*, vol. 5, 48:10. AL-NASĀ'Ī, *al-Sunan al-kubrā*, vol. 5, 6; vol. 6, 430. ABŪ YAʿLĀ, *Musnad*, no. 63, 91, AL-ṬABARĪ, *Jāmiʿ*, vol. 1, 59–62. IBN ABĪ DĀWŪD, *Maṣāḥif*, 18–21.

[67]) ʿUmāra b. Ghaziyya's account shows again many differences in the *matn* and deviates from the other versions also in the *isnād* (see note 63).

[68]) That both traditions go back to al-Zuhrī is not only suggested by the fact that both have more than one partial common link, but also by the fact that both traditions are transmitted by the same pupils of al-Zuhrī, not only by the most influential Ibrāhīm b. Saʿd, but also by Yūnus, Shuʿayb and even the unreliable ʿUmāra b. Ghaziyya.

tradition in question.[69]) It would be more accurate to reformulate this factual statement as a methodological principle: There is no way to ascertain that the single strand of the *isnād* which reaches back from the common link to earlier transmitters or authorities is historically reliable. If we accept this as a given, then our possibilities of dating are exhausted. However, these conclusions do not seem compelling to me. As I have argued elsewhere, the common links which belong to the generation of al-Zuhrī and the following generation should not necessarily be considered as originators of the traditions but as the first systematic collectors of traditions who transmitted them to regular classes of students out of which an institutionalized system of learning developed.[70]) Therefore, we should ask where the information comes from which is given in the tradition spread by the common link.

There is no reason to reject *a priori* the claim of the common link that he received the tradition or the information on which it is based from the person he names. In order to reject this claim, we must have concrete indications that it is in all likelihood not true, e.g., that the lifetimes of the common link and his alleged informant are not compatible with such a claim, etc. We may also wonder whether the *matn* of the tradition in question and of comparable traditions contain hints to possible motives for fabrication. This article is not the place to engage in a discussion of the details of the traditions which al-Zuhrī spread concerning the collection and edition of the Qurʾān and to ponder their plausibility, let alone their historical reliability. There are, however, arguments which speak against the assumption that al-Zuhrī invented them outright. Additionally, there seem to be no grounds for assuming that he cannot have received the information on the first collection from the little-known Successor ʿUbayd b. al-Sabbāq (date of death unknown) and that what he reports on the official edition of the Qurʾān comes from the well-known Companion Anas b. Mālik (d. between 91/709 and 93/711). This conclusion is corroborated by other traditions of al-Zuhrī concerning the collection of the Qurʾān which are additions or variant traditions to his main versions and are said to derive from other informants of him, such as Khārija b. Zayd, ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUtba and Sālim b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿUmar. Thus, some-

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[69]) J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*, Oxford 1950, 171–172. Juynboll, 'Some *Isnād*-Analytical Methods', 359, 369.

[70]) Cf. Motzki, '*Quo vadis* Ḥadīth-Forschung?', 45. There may have been occasional precedents already in the generation before al-Zuhrī which account for a few common links among the early *tābiʿūn*. For additional arguments concerning the common link see, H. Motzki, 'Dating Muslim Traditions' chap. 3.

thing can be said for the idea that al-Zuhrī's accounts are based on information received from the elder generation. If we take Anas's date of death as a chronological clue, this information must go back to the last decades of the 1st century AH. This statement should not be understood to mean that I claim that al-Zuhrī's accounts are literally taken over from his informants and that all the details of the two accounts necessarily derive from them; this does not seem very probable in view of the mainly oral character of the transmission in al-Zuhrī's time.[71]) However, it does seem safe to conclude that reports on a collection of the Qur'ān on Abū Bakr's behalf and on an official edition made by order of ʿUthmān were already in circulation towards the end of the 1st Islamic century and that al-Zuhrī possibly received some of them from the persons he indicated in his *isnāds*.

This dating differs fundamentally from the date which WANSBROUGH and BURTON assigned to these traditions. They claimed that these traditions could not have been reported before the beginning of the 3rd century AH, because they presuppose on the one hand the canonization of the Qur'ān, which, according to Wansbrough, cannot have taken place before the end of the 2nd century, and on the other hand the evolution of the *uṣūl* theory, which, according to Burton, cannot be dated before the end of the 2nd century either. Their theories concerning the origins of the traditions in question and the date of origin which they assign to them can, therefore, be dismissed. SCHWALLY did not venture to date the material, but he claims that the tradition concerning Abū Bakr's collection was fabricated later than that regarding the official edition under ʿUthmān, and he seems to assume that the account on Abū Bakr's collection originated in the ʿAbbāsid era. These assumptions are equally untenable.

Conclusion: We are not able to prove that the accounts on the history of the Qur'ān go back to eyewitnesses of the events which are alleged to have occurred. We cannot be sure that things really happened as is reported in the traditions. However, Muslim accounts are much earlier and thus much nearer to the time of the alleged events than hitherto assumed in Western scholarship. Admittedly, these accounts contain some details which seem to be implausible or, to put it more cautiously, await explanation, but the Western views which claim to replace them by more plausible and historically more reliable accounts are obviously far from what they make themselves out to be.

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[71]) For the character of the transmission in his time see MOTZKI, 'Der Fiqh des -Zuhrī'.

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